The *War Powers Resolution* ([WPR](http://www.answers.com/topic/wisconsin-public-radio)) was an act passed by Congress in 1973, over President Richard Nixon's veto, to “insure that the collective judgment of both the Congress and the President will [apply](http://www.answers.com/topic/presidential-powers) to the introduction of United States armed forces into hostilities.” The War Powers Resolution restricted Presidential war-making to situations in which Congress had declared war or had given the President specific permission to use the armed forces in hostilities or in which the nation, its territories, possessions, or armed forces had been attacked.  
  
The President was required “in every possible instance” to consult with Congress before introducing U.S. armed forces into hostilities. After every such introduction he was to “consult regularly with the Congress” until the forces had been removed. He was required to report to Congress within 48 hours after the introduction of forces into combat or situations in which hostilities were imminent and to report every six months thereafter.  
  
The President was given a maximum of 60 days to use the armed forces without congressional permission; after that time he would have to obtain a declaration of war, other congressional approval, or an extension of the time limit. If he did not gain congressional approval, he had 30 days to withdraw the forces from hostilities.  
  
Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George Bush routinely evaded or ignored provisions of the WPR, arguing that it was an unconstitutional infringement on their powers as commander in chief. [President Gerald Ford](http://www.answers.com/topic/gerald-ford) evacuated Americans and Europeans from South Vietnam, Laos, and [Cambodia](http://www.answers.com/topic/cambodia) in 1975, when communist forces seized power in those nations, without invoking the consultation clause of the WPR. He also attempted a rescue of the crew of the merchant ship *Mayaguez* after it was seized by Cambodian communists in 1975, without invoking the resolution. In 1980 [President Carter](http://www.answers.com/topic/jimmy-carter) ignored the consultation clauses of the WPR when he ordered military forces to try to rescue diplomatic hostages held by [Iran](http://www.answers.com/topic/iran) for more than a year. In 1982 President Ronald Reagan sent marines into [Lebanon](http://www.answers.com/topic/lebanon), where they remained for months exposed to hostile fire, without invoking the 60-day “clock.” When he bombed [Libya](http://www.answers.com/topic/libya) in 1986, he offered members of Congress a briefing while the planes were in midair, rather than consulting with them about whether the bombing should occur.  
  
In 1989, without consulting Congress, President Bush sent forces into [Panama](http://www.answers.com/topic/panama) to capture General Manuel Noriega and bring him back to the United States to face drug trafficking charges. (Bush did, however, comply with other provisions of the law.) Bush was authorized by Congress to use military force against [Saddam Hussein](http://www.answers.com/topic/saddam-hussein) of [Iraq](http://www.answers.com/topic/iraq), but Congress did not use the provisions of the WPR.  
  
Presidents do not use the WPR if their use of the armed forces involves peacekeeping or antiterrorist actions or for humanitarian assistance, such as the 1992–93 operation in [Somalia](http://www.answers.com/topic/somalia) and the 1993 airdrops of food in [Bosnia and Herzegovina](http://www.answers.com/topic/bosnia-and-herzegovina), or if covert operations are involved. Presidents never trigger the 60-day clock that starts when they use the armed forces. If Congress wishes to set a time limit, it must do so itself by passing a joint resolution. But that resolution itself is subject to a Presidential veto, which then must be overridden by a two-thirds vote of each house to go into effect. In practice, a President who fails to obey the terms of the WPR can continue using the armed forces until two-thirds of each chamber of Congress decides to force him to withdraw, a most unlikely situation.  
  
The courts have never ordered a President to comply with the WPR. In *Crockett v. Reagan* (1982), a case involving U.S. military advisers in El Salvador, a federal court declined to start the WPR's 60-day clock, ruling that it was a “political question” between Congress and the President, not subject to judicial consideration.

Questions for War Powers

1. Explain what the War Powers Resolution does and how it accomplishes this end?
2. Explain how Presidents have complied with the War Powers Resolution through the years of 1975-1989.
3. Explain why the 60-day limit on presidential power is seldom used?
4. What have the courts been able to do to enforce checks and balances?
5. How would you describe the war powers given to the President of the United States?